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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-sixth year

Identical letters dated 19 December 2011 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I write to you once again to place on record our serious concerns regarding the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which continues to rapidly deteriorate as a result of the illegal, provocative actions being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, and its lawless settlers. Destruction and trauma continue to be inflicted on the Palestinian civilian population as a result of the crimes being perpetrated against them as the occupying Power and its extremist settler militias continue to act with sheer violence and racism and total disregard for international law and for the human rights of the Palestinian people.

As reported recently by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), settler attacks against Palestinian civilians have increased this year by at least 50 per cent. These attacks, all committed under the watch of the Israeli occupying forces have also increased in maliciousness and intensity, targeting civilians, young and old, their properties and their livelihoods, and religious sites, including mosques and churches. Their illegal and violent actions have caused extensive destruction and are seriously inflaming tensions and religious sensitivities. Moreover, it is clear that such deplorable attacks are not isolated incidents but rather constitute a clear agenda by the settlers and their supporters within the Israeli Government and army to terrorize the Palestinian people and make their living conditions so unbearable, aimed at forcibly removing them from their land and further entrenching this illegitimate, belligerent foreign occupation.

In the past week alone, Israeli settlers have attacked at least three more mosques, burning and vandalizing them with disgraceful graffiti amounting to grave incitement. On Wednesday, 14 December 2011, extremist settlers set fire to a 13th century mosque, Okasha, in Jerusalem and spray-painted repulsive and hateful graffiti on the mosque walls regarding the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) and also damaged pipes creating flooding in the building. The following day,

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15 December, Israeli settlers set fire to Al-Nour mosque in the village of Burqa near Ramallah and also desecrated its walls with incitement graffiti, including a declaration of "War". The village has also been targeted by the settlers in recent rampages in which numerous olive trees have been destroyed. Today, settlers attacked and vandalized the Sahaba mosque in the village of Bani Naim south of Al-Khalil, spraying anti-Muslim graffiti and pro-settler slogans all over the mosque's walls.

Also, on 13 December, Israeli settlers forcibly entered the Orthodox Church of St. John the Baptist, which is located in the Jordan Valley. The settlers attacked the church under the watch of the occupying forces, vandalized it and caused damage to its contents and to its doors and windows as well as to several crosses in the church. In this regard, it is becoming abundantly clear that extremist Israeli settlers are attempting, and being permitted, to fan the flames of religious conflict with such attacks on Palestinian houses of worship, whether Muslim or Christian.

Israeli settlers have also perpetrated several other crimes in the past days against Palestinian civilians and properties throughout the Occupied West Bank. Recent attacks have included an attack by settlers on olive groves in the village of Burin near Nablus, in which at least 15 olive trees were cut down; a raid by settlers on the village of Duma near Nablus, where they set fire to a car and water tanker and also attempted to set fire to a bus; and the torching of a car in the village of Yasuf and another in the village of Haris in the Salfit area. The most recent of such incidents has been an attack today on the village of Beiteen near Ramallah, where dozens of Israeli settlers raided the village at dawn and set fire five cars, completely destroying them, and also causing damage to nearby building fronts and windows. The Israeli occupying forces present at the scene did not arrest a single settler, only dispersing them after the attack.

Also, in Al-Khalil (Hebron), where hundreds of extremist and criminal Israeli settlers continue to torment and terrorize the more than 180,000 Palestinian civilians who live there, settlers attacked Palestinians in the centre of the city on Friday, 16 December, spitting on young Palestinians and beating others. As is typical, Israeli soldiers in the vicinity did nothing to protect the civilians from the settler attacks and used force against international activists in the area who had been attempting to film the violent attack, breaking their cameras and intimidating them.

The lawlessness and aggression of Israel's illegal settler population is of course inherently linked to the lawlessness of the occupying Power and its aggressive and destructive settlement campaign, aimed at colonizing the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly East Jerusalem. While the Palestinian leadership and the rest of the international community continue to speak of and work for the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, Israel continues to expand and entrench its settlements on a daily basis, greatly damaging and reducing the viability of the two-State solution. Declarations of settlement construction continue as do the demolition of Palestinian homes and the confiscation of Palestinian land.

Yesterday, 18 December, the Israeli Government published tenders for the construction of another 1,028 settlement units in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. As indicated in a statement by the Israeli Housing Ministry, 500 units will be built in the settlement of "Har Homa" in Jabal Abu Ghneim in Occupied East Jerusalem, 348 units in the settlement of "Betar Illit" west of Bethlehem, and 180 units in the

settlement of "Givat Ze'ev" between Occupied East Jerusalem and Ramallah. In parallel, members of the Israeli Knesset continue their attempts to "legalize" so-called settlement outposts built on Palestinian land. All of these provocations are taking place in the midst of vocal appeals by the international community for Israel to stop this illegal, aggressive settlement campaign and in the midst of the efforts of the Quartet to revive negotiations between the two sides towards realizing the two-State solution, denigrating both the calls and the efforts made in this regard and proving once again Israel's impunity and absolute disdain for international law and its obligations as Member State of the United Nations in accordance with the Charter and relevant resolutions.

The recent period has also witnessed the further Israeli demolition of Palestinian properties. Today, the occupying Power issued demolition notices to Palestinian families in villages north of the Jordan Valley declaring the intention to demolish several homes and barns. Also, on 13 December, the Israel occupying forces demolished four homes in Al-Makhrour area of Beit Jala, a predominantly Christian town near Bethlehem that is being suffocated by Israel's illegal settlement enterprise. The same day, the occupying forces handed notices to several Palestinian families prohibiting land reclamation in the area, claiming that the land is "Israeli property". The occupying Power has also announced plans to confiscate land belonging to the Cremisan vineyard in order to expand its illegal wall in the town of Beit Jala, which has been reduced to one third of its size since the Israeli occupation began in 1967. In this regard, it must be noted that the city of Bethlehem is now surrounded by 19 Israeli settlements as well as by the wall and a network of Israeli-only bypass roads.

Faced with this blatant escalation of Israeli violations and provocations, we call on the international community, particularly the Security Council, to act with conviction to send a clear signal to Israel, the occupying Power, that all of these illegal actions will not be tolerated and must be brought to a complete halt. Unequivocal demands must be made for Israel to halt and reverse its illegal settlement campaign and collective, serious measures must be taken to ensure accountability must be undertaken if Israel refuses to comply with the legal obligations incumbent upon it, including under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Barring this, we will surely only continue to witness the further deterioration of the situation on the ground, the failure of any and all efforts to restore confidence between the two sides and to revive the peace process, and the further destruction of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, with grave consequences for our peoples and the region as a whole.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 414 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 12 December 2011 (A/ES-10/542-S/2011/768), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations